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THE DECLINE IN TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

Evidence of a settled policy of antagonism toward trade unions by the more powerful industrial combinations has been accumulating during the last two years. The first effect of the movement toward monopoly after 1898 was to stimulate a growth both of industrial consolidation and of combination in the field of labor. The panic of 1903 seems to have tried the industrial combinations by fire, and those which have persisted, find themselves in a position of steadily increasing strength. Appreciating this fact, they now have come into the open with an announced program of the open shop. Undoubtedly the excesses of the trade unions in the years after 1901, which were partly an expression of their sudden accession of power, are in part accountable for this present attitude of the trusts. The movement towards suppression of unionism seems to have gained in intensity during and since the depression of 1907 as well. The employers' associations have all been active. Numerous decisions in the courts have been favorable to the employer. So that, all things considered, the last two years may be accounted extremely critical ones in the field of labor organization.

The progress of invention of labor-saving devices, the steady influx of immigrant cheap labor, persistence in the policy of emasculation of the unions by promotion of all the leaders who demonstrate capacity, are influences which still further favor a decline or at all events a cessation of growth in the membership and the power of trade unions. The Toronto convention of the American Federation of Labor in 1909 was rendered noteworthy by the open confession of the impending crisis on the part of the principal labor leaders of the country. It now appears as if assured success in trades unionism would be, for the time at least, limited to the building trades, to those occupations entailing great personal responsibility as well as skill, notably the railway unions; and to the small highly skilled trades

which have firmly entrenched themselves behind policies of conservative finance and a reasonable attitude toward independent workmen. The figures in the subjoined table represent the numerical strength, so far as can be obtained, of the principal organizations at this time.

The sources of these statistics are primarily the publications of the American Federation of Labor and of the several constituent trade unions. The state Labor Bureaus of New York and Massachusetts give official statistics of membership for their territories; but regions like Pennsylvania and the Middle West, where the most bitter contentions have of late occurred, afford no official statistics gathered by public authority. The Pittsburgh Survey has devoted special attention to this subject; its evidence being conclusive as to a settled policy in the iron and steel trades of rigid repression of organization. In the use of the official trade union publications two errors must be constantly guarded against. The trade union monthlies are of service in maintaining trade union enthusiasm. It is imperative that their announcement of membership should be as roseate as possible. The favorable outcome of strikes and agreements is more apt to be fully described than are reverses. A long list of collective bargains discontinued by the newly organized employers since the panic of 1907 occasions but little comment. Nevertheless at times exasperated officials will reveal their true frame of mind; as, for example, in the December, 1909, issue of the *Machinists Monthly Journal*. The true significance of returns as to membership is at these times revealed. A pleasing exception to the policy of secretiveness is found in the *United Mine Workers Journal*, which presents regularly a column of data "for students."

The American Federation of Labor, through its secretary's annual report, gives a full statement of receipts and disbursements. The principal income is derived from the per capita tax on membership. This is the basis of voting strength in the convention on the part of the international unions; one vote being allowed for each one hundred members paying the tax. Naturally the unions endeavor to dodge these

MEMBERSHIP OF AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS, 1901-09

Unions	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909
Rollermakers and Iron Shipbuilders,				(f)		12,800	15,700	15,200	12,600
Steam Engineers,						17,300	17,500	16,800	16,100
Electrical Workers,						21,000	30,200	32,100	13,800
Iron-ore, Steel, and Tin Workers,						12,300	12,500	17,300	10,700
Iron-ore, Steel, and Tin Workers, (1891)						10,000	10,000	7,172	6,000
Miners Union, (a)	24,068			13,500	48,500	50,000	56,000	62,100	48,400
Miners Union, (b)				55,700	55,000	60,000	73,000	18,200	
Metal Polishers, Buffers, and Platers,						10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Iron Moulders Union, (a)				30,000	30,000	15,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Iron Moulders Union, (b)	48,115		54,251	68,700	85,760	90,692	98,578	101,000	120,000
Steel Metal Workers,					13,000	12,900	15,300	16,100	16,000 (f)
Tin Plate Workers,						1,100	1,400	1,100	1,500
Urnace Workers and Smelters,	1,400	900		disbanded					
Cigar Makers,					41,387	40,590	42,687	47,593	39,800 (a)
Tobacco Workers,					5,400	5,500	5,100	4,600	4,300
Lint Glass Workers,									
Window Glass Flatteners,	7,200	7,100	Withdrawn from Am Fed						
Window Glass Workers,			Suspended from Am Fed		1,700	1,600	1,100	1,200	1,100
Window Glass Workers,						5,600	6,600	Withdrawn from Am Fed	
Window Glass Snappers,					1,200	1,000	600	Charter revoked	
Veget Cutters and Butcher Workmen,		8,400	25,300	15,000 (c)	6,200	5,000	5,800	6,300	6,300
Paper Makers,			10,700	8,800	5,000	5,300	5,100	4,300	1,000
Powder and High Explosive Workers,				700	700	600	500	500	200
United Mine (Coal) Workers, (a)		185,400	217,300	277,700	261,900	237,900	251,900	252,500	267,000
United Mine Workers, (b)		175,367	247,240	271,000	267,351	228,121	260,710	252,018	265,274
Foot and Shoe Workers,				69,290	32,000	32,100	32,000	32,000	29,000

United Textile Workers,		12,000	10,000	10,000	15,474	12,900	10,000
Hatery Workmen,		40,000	31,000	30,000	Charter revoked	40,000	10,000
United Garment Workers,	15,400	15,700	31,900	21,910	33,400	15,900	15,100 (e)
Street and Electric Railway Workers,	4,300	25,000	30,000	30,000	32,000 (d)	32,000 (d)	33,000
United Bro. of Carpenters and Joiners, (a)	40,000	100,000	155,160	113,200	163,700	179,000	161,000
United Bro. of Carpenters and Joiners, (b)	70,000	122,568	161,200	101,217	170,102	178,303 (3)	200,000
Knibers National Union,		20,000	23,000	22,700	23,100	23,700	25,500
Rail Clerks,		50,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	15,000
Sewers Union,			19,500	19,100	21,400	25,700	16,800
Longshoremen Assoc	25,000	50,000	17,800	31,000	32,000	31,700	21,000
Printers, Bro. of,		60,700	31,200	55,300	62,400	61,800	70,600
Journeyman Tailors Union,			15,000	10,600	10,700	16,100	13,200
Printers, Bro. of,		84,000	78,300 (c)	10,200	16,900	37,700	32,000
Photographers Union,			16,734	11,000	12,457	13,700	11,021
Automotive Engineers, (g)		41,124		19,375	61,000		61,970 (m)
Railway Trainmen, (g)	66,340	74,539		78,000		101,000	102,200
Railway Conductors, (g)	30,300	31,288		35,000		38,371	33,370 (k)
Automotive, Trench and Enginemen, (g)		54,434		58,000		55,000	60,000
Railway Carpenters, (g)				20,000			18,522
Railway Telegraphers, (h)		13,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Maintenance of Way Men, (h)		12,000 (l)	12,000	12,000	13,200	13,500	10,000
Switchmen Union, (h)	14,000			8,100	9,200	9,300	9,000
Railway Clerks, (h)	1,300	600	disbanded				
Railway Expressmen, (h)	1,400	300	disbanded				

- (a) From Am Fed Reports
 (b) From Trade Union Journal
 (c) Strike
 (d) Union estimate 60,000
 (e) Union estimate 75,000 in good and bad standing
- (f) 45,000 Boilermakers and 100,000 Helpers
 (g) The "old" brotherhoods not affiliated with Am Fed
 (h) Belonging to the Am Fed., Railway Department
- (i) 50,000 claimed in arrears
 (j) Chicago strike, May, 1905
 (k) 90% of the trade
 (l) 40,000?
 (m) 85% of the trade

taxes to the Federation, by making as low returns of membership as possible in order that their locals may retain funds for their own uses. No local is ever able to report its actual militant strength, for on no date probably are all of its defective members "in good standing." At all times when there is no immediate pressure by the union and during periods of trade union dulness, the proportion of members in arrears for dues tends to increase. As compared with the British unions the proportions of arrearage are very striking.

Under these circumstances it seems likely that official membership of the Federation of Labor according to its reports represents bed rock. It is uncertain how much should be added to bring the figures to a full representation of the active membership of all the local and national bodies. The Iron Moulders' membership according to the table below affords an extreme illustration in this regard. Even more important than a mere study of the movements of membership would be a statistical investigation of trade agreements during the last few years. Many great companies have discontinued formal relations with their associated employees; notably the Steel Corporation, which at the outset signed agreements with nearly all of its 125,000 employees. The number now working under the open shop is said to be very large. Even where trade agreements have been renewed, they have been made under less advantageous terms so far as labor is concerned. The course of events in the coal fields affords clear evidence as to this. The Iron Moulders and Machinists have all suffered serious defeats in the making of collective bargains. Even the Longshoremen on the Great Lakes seem to have had difficulty in renewing the arrangements which appear to have been so beneficial to both parties concerned. In short, collective bargaining on a large scale in the United States seems to be for the moment upon the decline. This is a tendency fraught with most serious industrial and political possibilities. It threatens particularly to carry grave unrest from the industrial field over into the domain of politics.

The following figures do not pretend to be complete or definitive, but they are the results of a close examination of the official records of the unions themselves, compared for all districts where possible with data gathered by state bureaus of labor. It is believed that even in this indefinite form they merit the serious consideration of those interested in social welfare and industrial opportunity.

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AN AMERICAN EXPERIMENT IN WORKMEN'S INSURANCE

ON July 1st, 1904, the South Penn Oil Company, one of the subsidiary branches of the Standard Oil Company, established and put in operation an employees' benefit association, which has now been running long enough and with sufficient success to make its results of interest to economists and of possible value in similar enterprises.

The corporation in question is engaged in the production of crude oil, and owing to the somewhat hazardous nature of the work, which involves climbing derricks and running gas and steam engines, it was deemed advisable to inaugurate a relief association to insure against accidents, as well as to pay benefits for sickness of any kind however caused, and death benefits for death during the term of employment and membership in the association. On leaving the employment of the company for any reason, the membership of the employee ceases, but if he has paid dues for more than one year a small rebate is returned to him if he is laid off without fault on his part.

These men are divided into three classes: those receiving wages not exceeding \$75.00 per month form Class 1; those receiving between \$75.00 and \$100.00 per month, Class 2; and those receiving more than \$100.00 a month, Class 3. The third class is relatively very small, composed mainly